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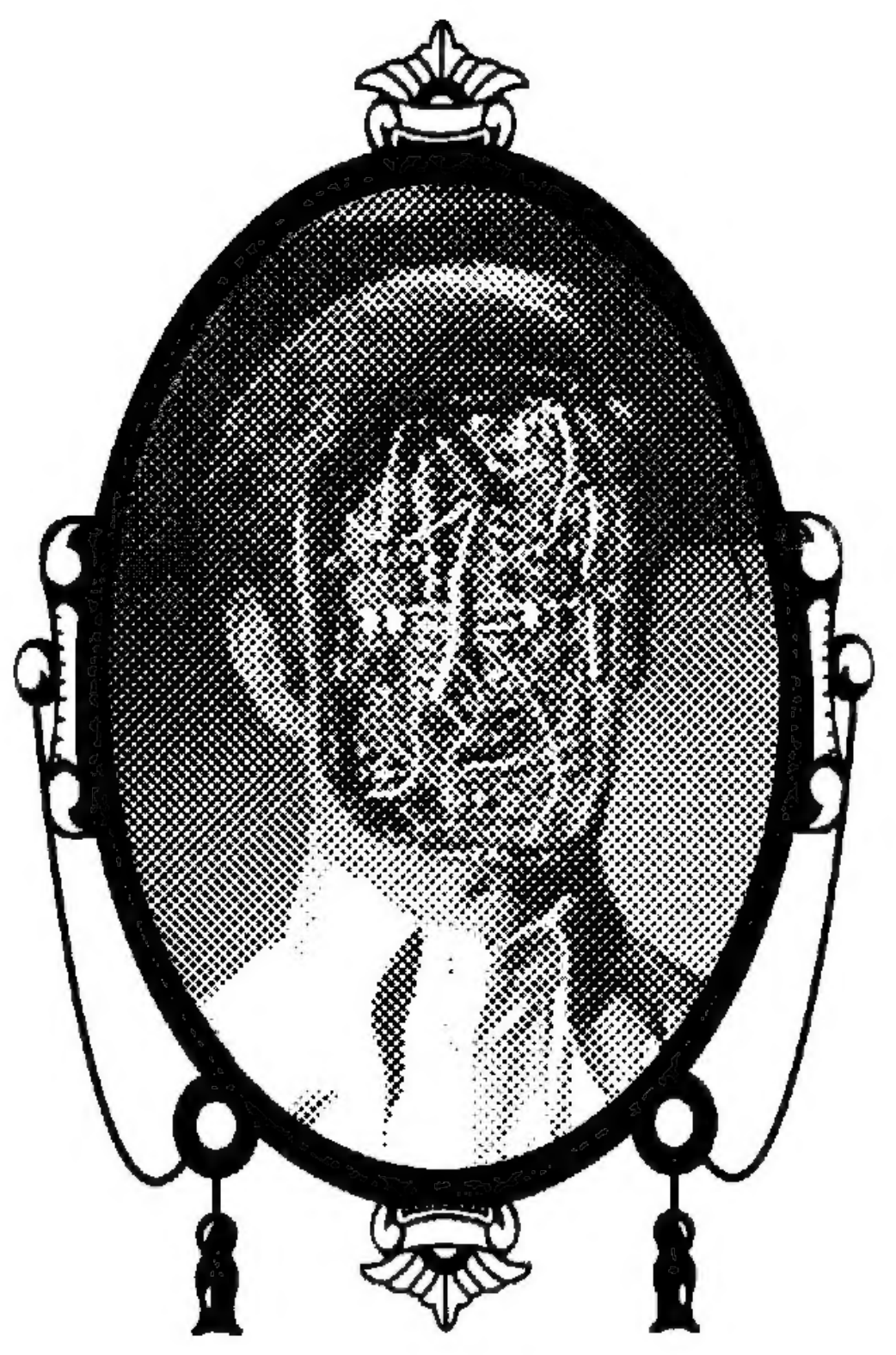

Mothers News

"The singing man keepes his shop in his throate"

previously Pull The Strings
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THE PAPER OF RECORD

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THE HUMID PART OF AMERICA
21st CENTURY HAND-WAY
A SLOWED ROLL

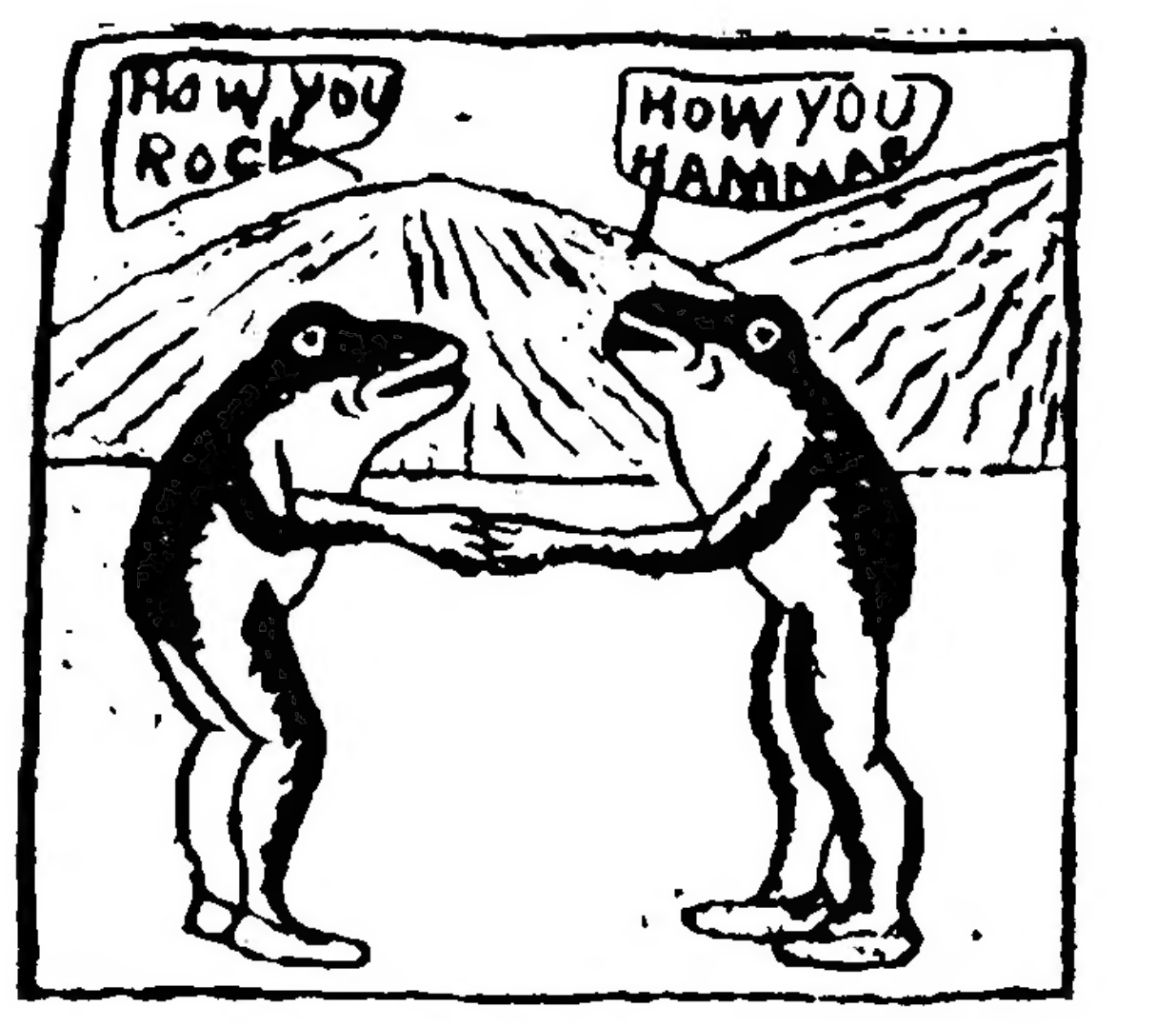
SPECIAL EDITION - FROGS

This issue of Mothers News is mostly about frogs. Frogs and frog imagery keep popping up around the MN office. What does it mean? It's unclear.

BEST HARIBO VARIANT

Haribo frogs. Did you know you can lick the marshmallow side of a Haribo frog and stick it to a car and it will stay there forever? I "knew" this at age 9 despite never having tested it or remembering where I heard it from, and I still "know" this and will never test it. Cool fact! Haribo frogs are the best style of gummy products because frogs themselves are fairly gummy, although the second best is cola bottles and regular cola bottles aren't gummy at all, quite the opposite. We dropped a major riff on this subject last issue, if you missed it please mail $.35 to this newspaper and we will send it out again glued to a postcard.

DISSECTION OF



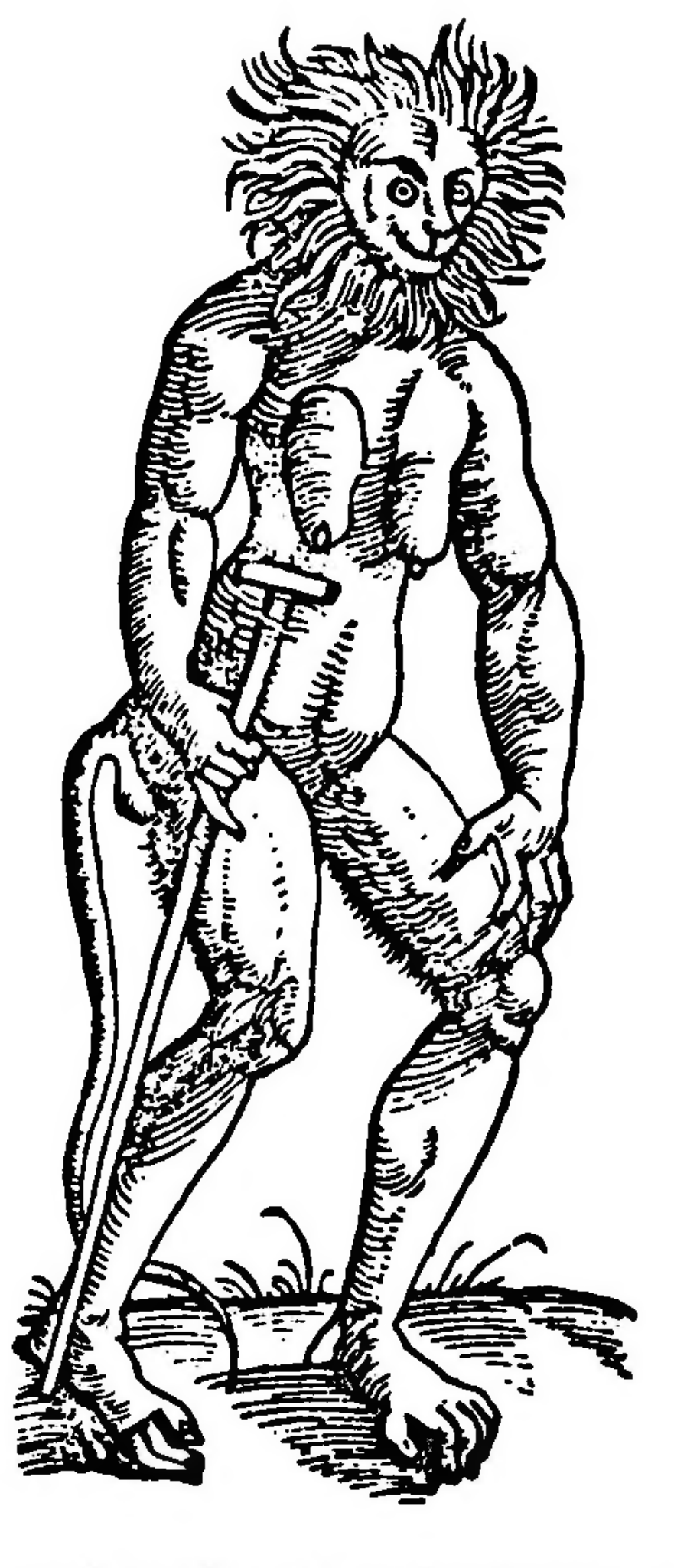
Junior high school is when children across the world learn big lessons by being told to dissect a frog. Not everyone gets the same lesson though- some learn that they can say no to authority on moral grounds and the ramifications are manageable. Some learn that a dead frog isn't nearly as gross as they thought, or to put it another way, they learn that the irridescent black ooze that churns and festers inside all living beings is mostly transmuted after death. One thing that everyone learns is the most horrible thing about death- that it's completely boring.

JUMPING

Frogs jump but can't run, is that a thing? Is it kind of weird, or just "the way"? When I was a kid I heard the expression "if a frog had wings they would hit him in the ass when he jumped". Took me several years to figure that one out.

TOAD PEE

Once when I was a kid I was in a very bad mood for a dumb reason at a family barbeque, and I was sulking in my room. My uncle caught a toad in the garden and brought it to my room to cheer me up, it immediately peed on my bed. Very complicated situation, I caught a very real chuckle on how all existence is fundamentally absurd. I think it was a Sunday, maybe I was seven years old. Most of the time the way in which you're being an idiot is unknowable, but sometimes you see it in a second, because of an infinitely broad finger pointing at absolutly everything there is, what a blessing. Toad church for sulking children.



POISON

Certain frogs are very poisonous to eat, but don't worry about which frogs these are, because they let you know with bright and garish coloration, reminiscent of a boogie board. This anti-camoflague is known as aposematism-- the same process is in play in the attention-getting stripe on a skunk's back and in the flashy adornments, long hair, and general boisterousness of humans. The golden poison frog, Phyllobates terribilis, lives on the pacific coast of Columbia, and is possibly the most poisonous animal on earth. Like all frogs, P Terriblis is not venomous- they lack an offensive delivery mechanism. The only way to deliver their poison is to be et, which no one wants to do (be et). Of course not everything that's brightly colored is poisonous- many colorful non-frogs are delicious and that's it- strawberries, raspberries, all those good things.

"COUGHING GUY"

I used to live in this big old farmhouse at the edge of town with a frog pond nearby and a culvert across the road where people would pull over and do drugs / throw up / have sex. One time late at night as I was going to sleep I was roused by someone who had parked in the culvert- they were shouting "Hey, are you alright? hey, coughing guy, are you alright?". I assumed they were yelling at their partner (who had presumably become sick) until I realized they were yelling at the house. They were hearing the low insistent barking of the frogs as a horrible violent coughing fit, and couldn't just stand by and listen to someone maybe die of god knows what (this is honorable). "It's frogs" I yelled. "That doesn't sound like frogs to me" they said. "I don't know what to tell you" I said.

HOLDEN FROG

Those frogs were cool though. There was one that let me scoop him up and hold him in a flat hand, I called him Holden Frog. The other frogs that had names were: Evil Mike, Bear. Evil Mike had a pointed face and athletic build (to the degree that a frog can be called "athletic"). Bear was a classic henchman archetype- big and slow, roughly spherical. I guess I touched the frogs a fair amount, hopefully I didn't damage them (I probably did). As for me I never got warts, even when I tried. I used to have 5 warts on my knee, in an arrangement that recalled a Roman numeral 6. They went away, not sure why. Around the time I was living with the frogs I tried to draw the warts back on and make them grow again by suggestion, but it didn't work. I think they thrive on spite. The warts I mean. The frogs thrive on bugs, everyone knows that.

THE SAINT by Kate Schapira

THE SAINT OF ONE-TRACK BROTHERS

And so they used to talk day after day and each of them hoped that the other would Change Over, but neither of them did.

In the kitchen, Charlie talks about biking to work, animated, with blinking taillights. Mike is tolerant, minimal.

They may look to each other like their outlines: reflective vests, coatings of dirt. Exhaust. Concern. Waist-high working ditches in the rain, congestion alonside, stretch for miles. Use one story to blot another, anxious forehead bent like a napkin, take care without taking care.

SHAKESPEARE ADVERSITY RIFF

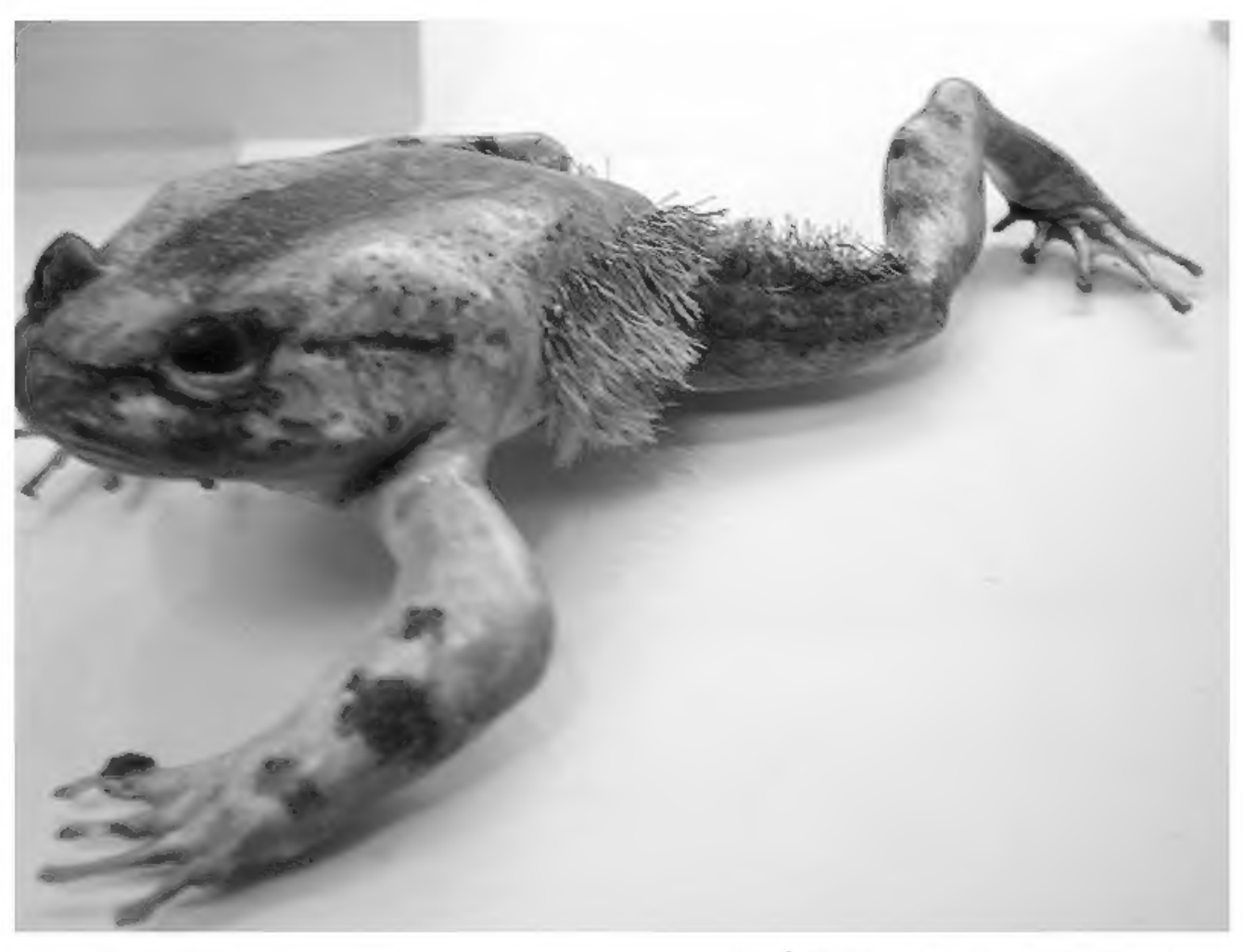
Shakespeare said "Sweet are the uses of adversity which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head.". This is based on the idea, popular in Shakespeare's time, that toads had a stone in their skull that, could be used as a universal antidote to poison, if extracted from the toad while it was still alive. According to 17th century naturalist Edward Topsell, this could be accomplished by simply setting the toad on a piece of red cloth. Needless to say there is no such stone, and what was labeled toadstone was more often than not the fossilized teeth of Lepidotes, an extinct genus of ray-finned fish from the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods (still pretty cool but nonetheless unlikely to deter the assassin's pills and powders). Let's not point the finger at Shakespeare- he was using the best data available to him, and pound for pound, maybe no one said as much great stuff as him (or her)(or whoever Shakespeare was)(or might have been / is). Analogy collapse notwithstanding, the uses of adversity may still be sweet, possibly in the same way they were to the Bard of Avon. Unfortunately we lack a sufficient toad-based method of understanding them.

"HORROR FROG"

Trichobatrachus Robustus is a kind of frog from Cameroon and is AKA "Horror Frog". When threatened, T Robustus breaks its own toe bones and forces them through the foot to produce claws that scratch. That's crazy. Males of the species also grow hair-like strands of skin and arteries when they breed. It is thought that the "hairs" allow them to take in more oxygen through their skin while they take care of their brood. Perhaps this is also a aposematic signal, to indicate "I operate outside of all law".

IT'S AN AMPHIBIAN

Frogs are amphibians, living in the water and on land, or more specifically, in the border between the two. A lazy scientist may decide that they are a fish when they're young and a reptile as an adult- this is an easy mistake and not too far off, and one of the less-harmful models of reality to have (considering that all models of reality are false, and some are lethal).

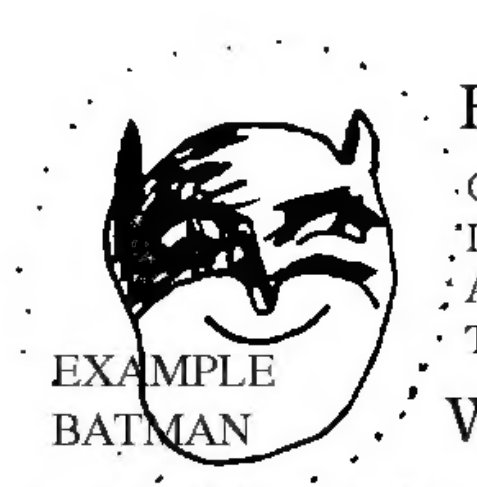


Trichobatrachus Robustus

THE DIFFERENCE BTW FROGS & TOADS

All toads are frogs but not all frogs are toads- toads are a subset of the set "frogs". Toads are frogs that appear toadlike, that's the main distinction. A group of toads is called a knot. A group of frogs is called an army. A group of bullfrogs is a chorus (which is a subset of an army).

A trophy Life 19 chimpendale



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Dear Providence, "live because it lasts." After five years of you, I finally get it. Thanks for the life lessons. See you for a hot second in September. Visit through the portal any time.

x o *Susan*

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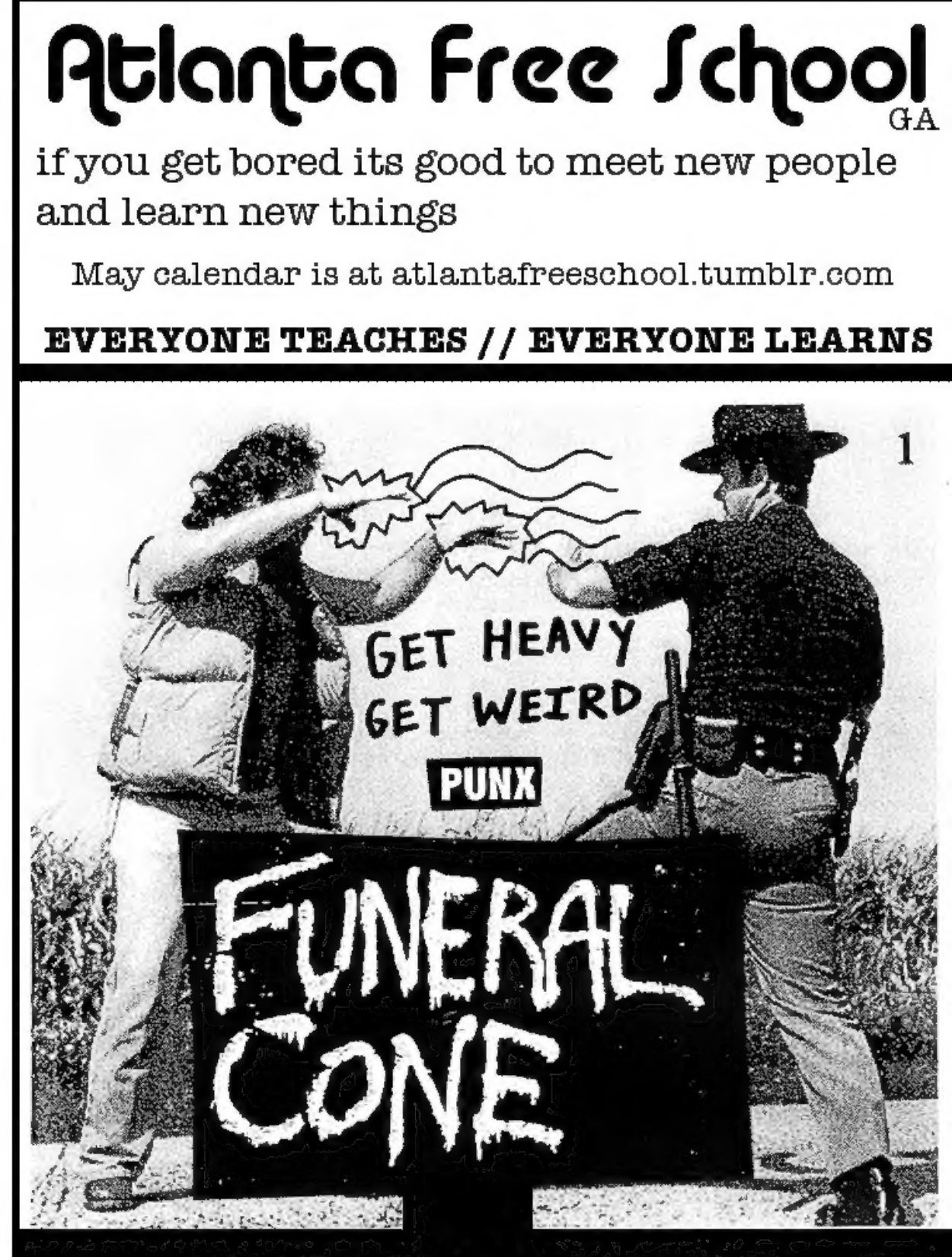

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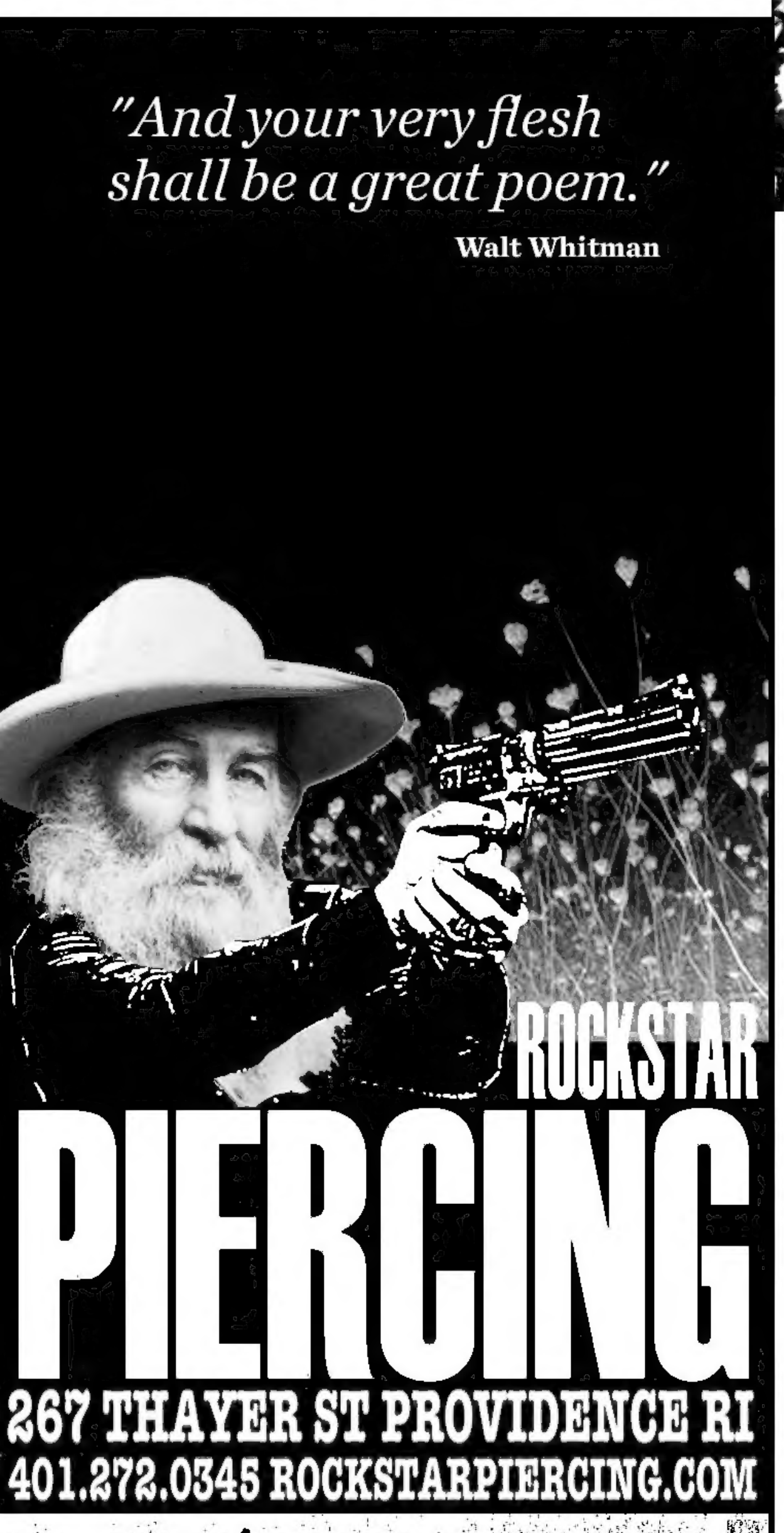

"And your very flesh shall be a great poem."
Walt Whitman

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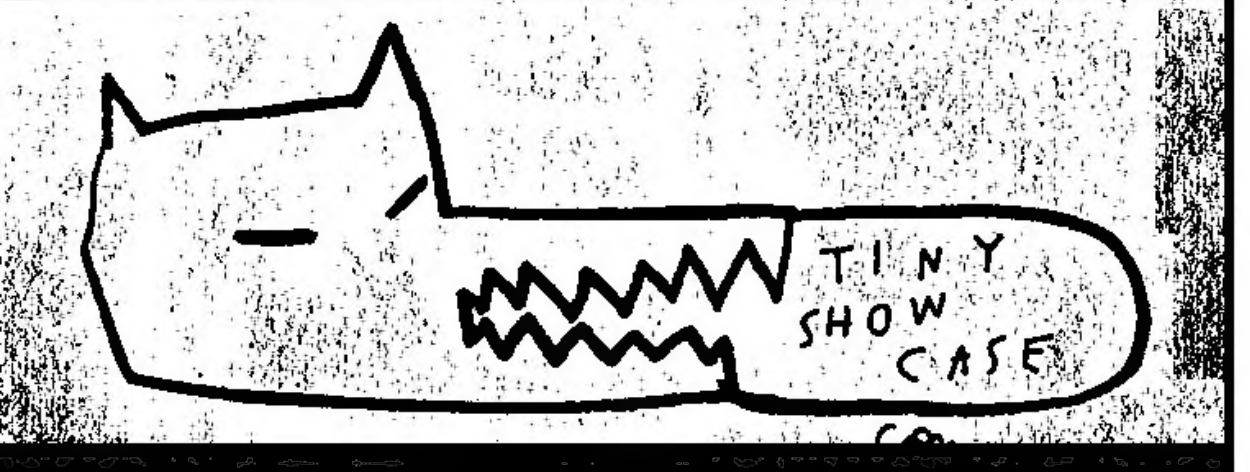

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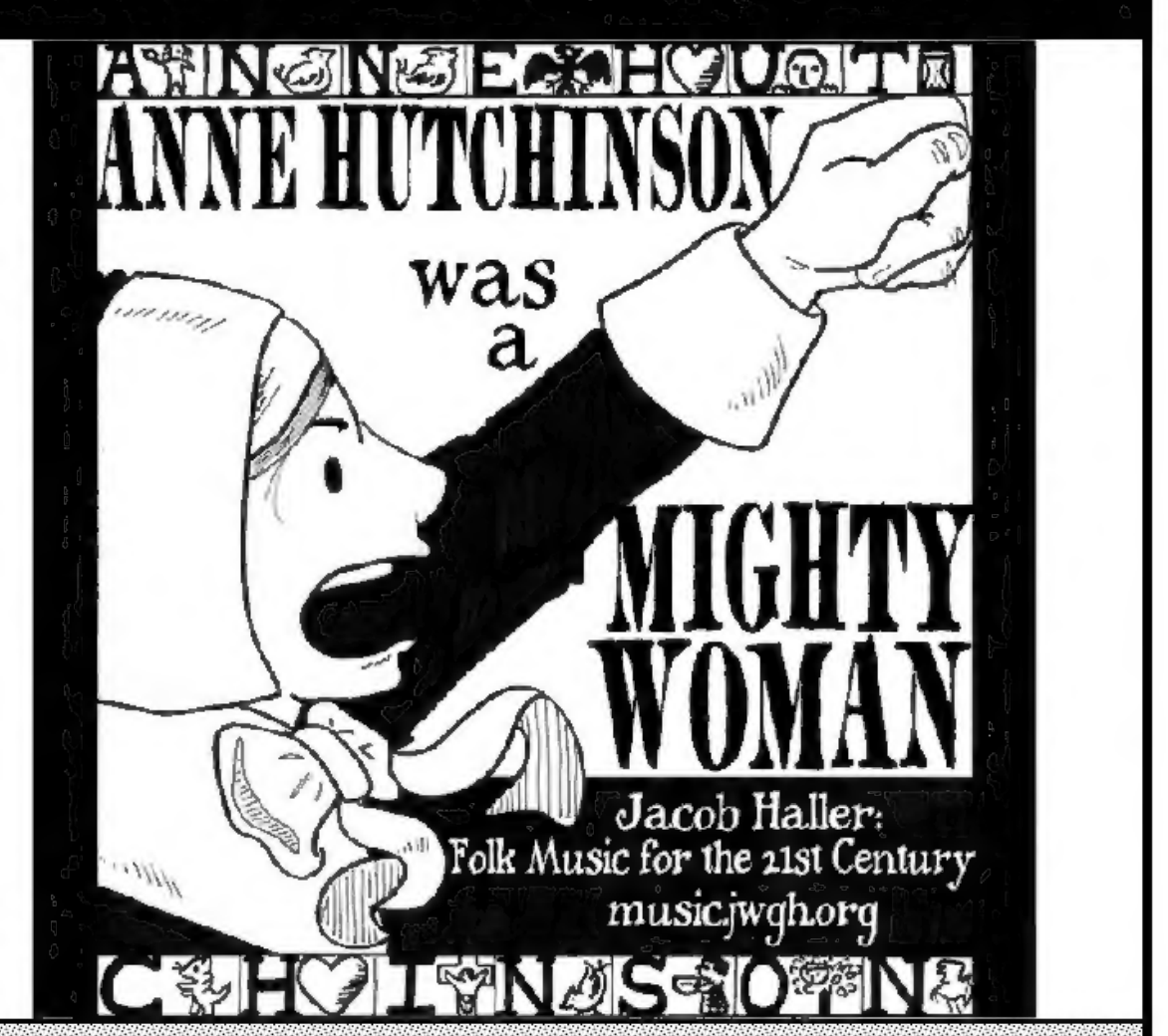

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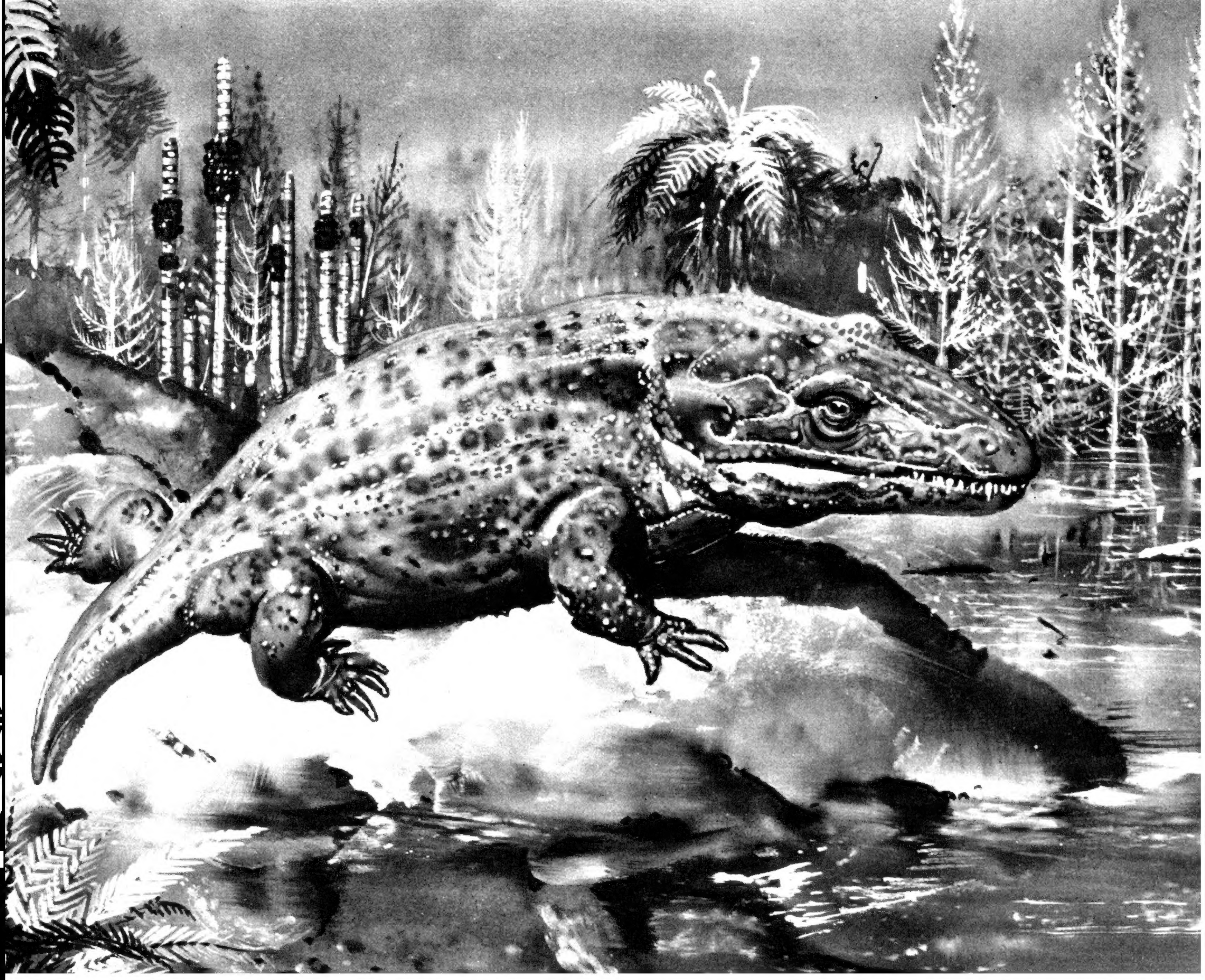

painting by Zdeněk Burian

Above: *Mastodonsaurus*, a huge amphibian stegocephalian, found in Triassic strata in Europe and North Africa, had a flat skull four feet long. The biggest amphibian of all time, it was mainly aquatic and lived on fish. It died out at the end of the Triassic.

MUTATIONS

Frogs partially breathe and drink through their skin, which makes them highly succeptible to toxins in the water, while also remaining succeptible to toxins in the air/earth- double damned. As a result, when things go bad, frogs are one of the first species to mutate wildly. If you're a child of the 90s you may have a different idea of what it is to mutate than the scientific community does- it rarely results in increased size, intelligence, dexterity, fighting ability, lasers shoot from eyes, weather control, or Magneto (although to be fair we have no tests for frog ESP). Speaking generally, the percentage of beneficial mutations in a generation is almost not worth talking about. It usually messes you up. That said, every living organism is a direct result of an uncountable number of beneficial mutations- if frogs are mutating more than other species due to a sensitivity to their environment, they are also making it (slightly) more likely that as a species they'll be able to survive and thrive in a new environment. Of course the method of mutation is random change, so it will take a lot of processing (aka frog death) before something useful hits. Statistics for mutations categorized by fitness effects are lacking for large organisms like frogs, but it's not massively incorrect to infer numbers from less complicated organisms (viruses) and say that a third of all mutations are so bad you die, a third are bad but not lethal, a third are neutral but not good for you, and somewhere in there is less than 2% that are beneficial in some small way. Very possibly the cost is too high-- if the population isn't high enough at the beginning of exposure, it's Goodnight Irene. Dan Higgs has a beautiful riff about "new organs if we but cultivate their need"- this is most of the time not how nature operates, but it's a compelling narrative to think of a frog cultivating a need for a third leg growing from the middle of its back. When would this be useful? Climbing up the inside of a pipe maybe?

FROGS IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible (Exodus 8:6) the Second Plague is one of frogs is sent upon Egypt; this was a deliberate irony by the God of Moses, as the Egyptians saw frogs as a symbol of life and worshiped a frog-goddess. But isn't everything a both deliberate by default and ironic by default to the God of Moses? Come on.

Eugene Teal

BOILING A FROG SLOWLY

A widely repeated anecdote about frogs is that if you put a frog in boiling water they'll jump out BUT if you put them in cold water you can slowly raise the heat to the boiling point and they'll just sit there and get cooked alive. This is so dumb! They will definitely jump out when it gets a little bit uncomfortable!!! I can see this being very useful as a cautionary tale about blindness towards significant changes that occur gradually, or as a way to add emotional heft to the so-called Paradox Of The Heap. But being cooked alive?? Come on, use your head. Frogs are generally so good about leaving a situation that is no longer comfortable that this anecdote could be considered slander (given an extremely broad definition of slander, which many courts, sadly, now accept). If you want a good example of this same kind of creeping normalcy, try deforestation, economic inequality, shit, this process is everywhere in human society.

FROGS AS PETS

Bullfrogs are a very common frog in North America but they make terrible pets- PetWatch, a project of EcoHealth Alliance advising on the suitability of different species as pets, has classified bullfrogs as "worst choice pets". Maybe other kinds of frogs are good pets? I don't care about pets.

THE AMBROSE BIERCE MEMORIAL WORD JUMBLE

by Ambrose Bierce before he died

HONIAFS A despot whom the wise ridicule and obey. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

NICEOXPET A thing which takes the liberty to differ from other things of its class ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

ICEDED To succumb to the preponderance of one set of influences over another set. ☐☐☐☐☐☐

TOP FROG ARTISTS

- Jim Woodring
- Aristophanes
- Clarence "Frogman" Henry
- Mel Torme "the Velvet Frog"
- Jim Henson
- Crazy Frog (aka The Annoying Thing)
- The Frogs (band)
- Keroppi Hasunoue
- Fats Waller as a frog in "Swing Wedding" (MGM, 1937)
- the Mighty Thor #363-366 when he turned into a frog
- Merzbow

OFFICIAL INFO

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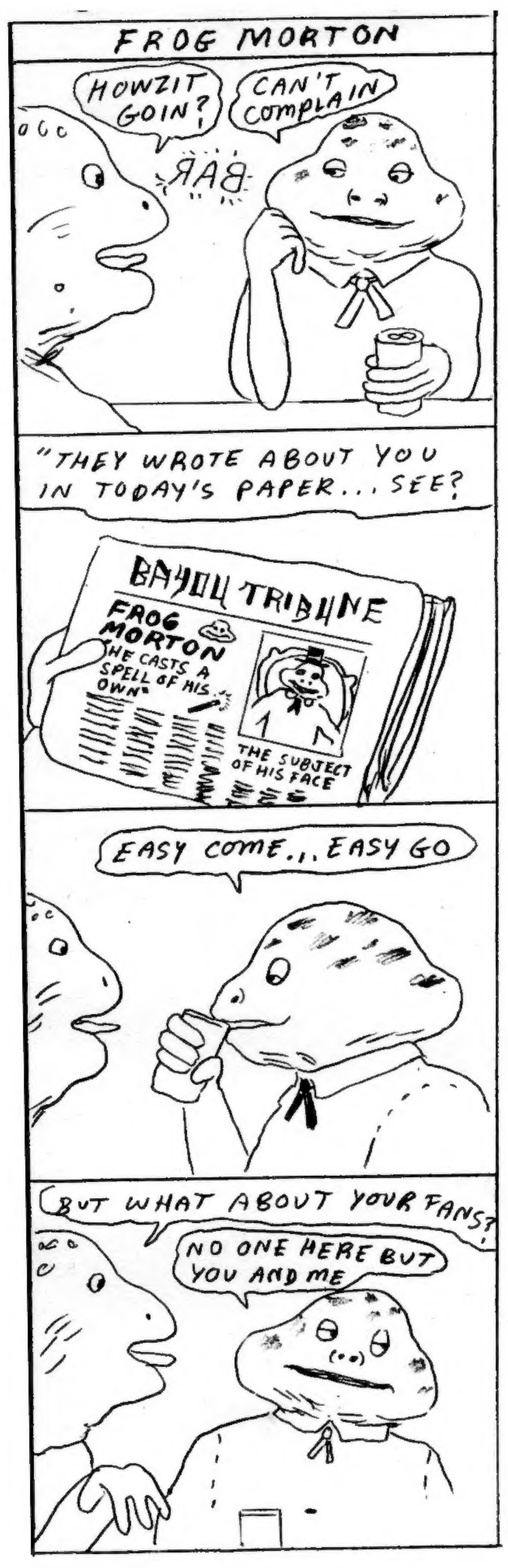
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BAR
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BAYOU TRIBUNE
FROG MORTON
"HE CASTS A SPELL OF HIS OWN"
THE SUBJECT OF HIS FACE
EASY COME... EASY GO
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR FANS?
NO ONE HERE BUT YOU AND ME

CF

WOODSWALKER

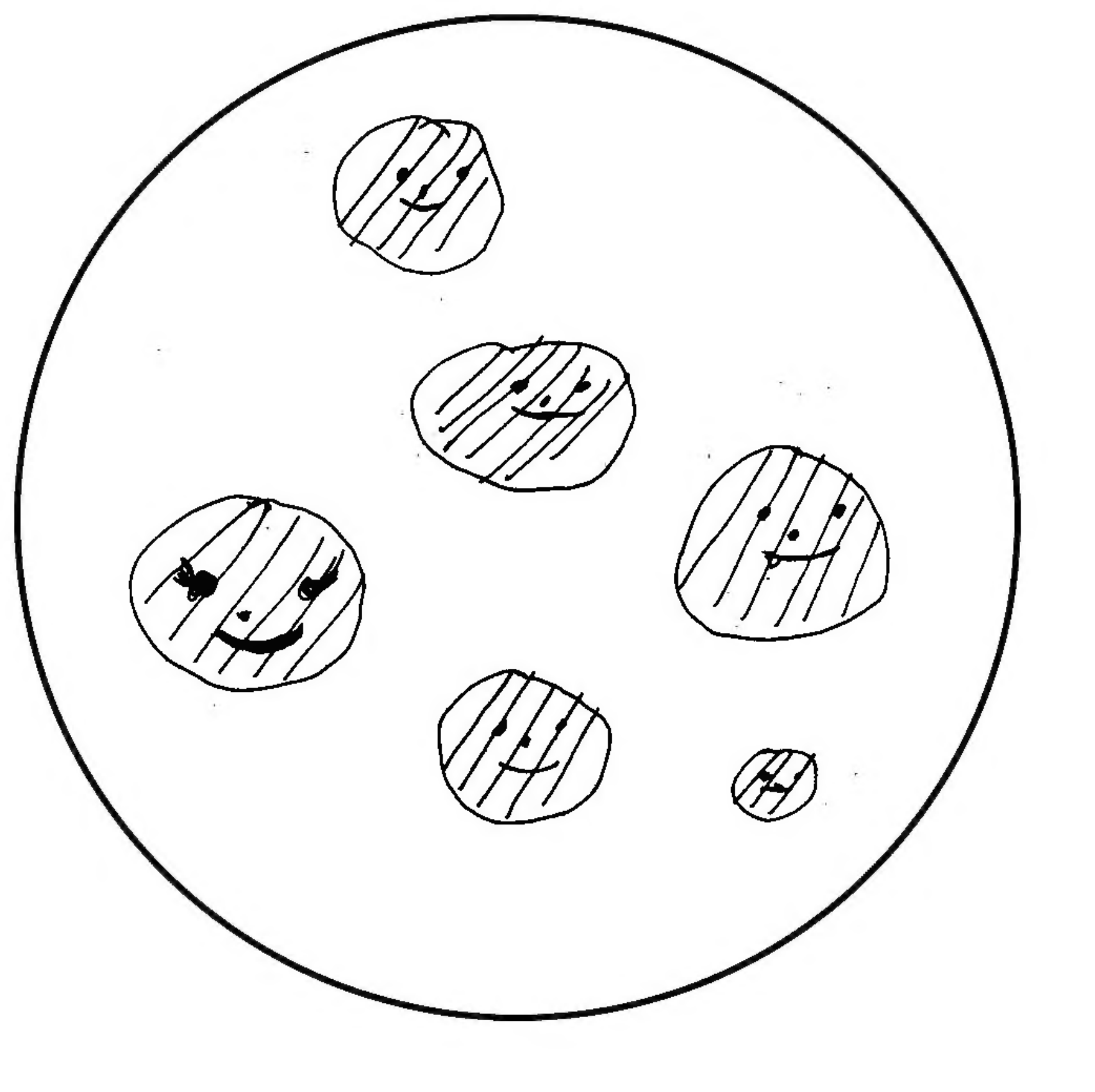
by Roby Newton

Saint John's Wort
hypericum perforatum

When the daylight hours are at their maximum, around the summer solstice (ethnotraditionally, Midsummer's Eve or Saint John's Day), Saint John's Wort begins to show its bright yellow flowers, reminiscent of sunshine, lover of long light. The flowering tops are medicinally potent, but the buds, before the blooming, are fun. When you squeeze a bud between your fingernails, it bleeds a reddish purple liquid, similar to what Saint John bled when they lopped off his head, though likely less of it.

You will find this plant in all manner of wasteland, in meadows and pastures, along the train tracks, next to the abandoned factory, growing through the cracks in the asphalt of the shopping mall parking lot. It is no coincidence that it is able to persevere through adverse and difficult conditions, it can help a human do the same. It has multiple chemical components that help alleviate depression, it is an effective general nerve tonic, and when infused in oil, useful externally for injuries of varying types. However, it has one potentially dangerous side effect: photosensitivity. One cannot help but wonder if that is not part of its gift, when the darkness overwhelms in winter, and we can never seem to get enough light, hypericum perforatum makes it easier for us. The name perforatum is derived from the tiny translucent dots in the leaves, small apertures that let light through.

Dry the flowers and leaves for a winter tea to remember summer, or infuse oil with the fresh herb to make a beautiful blood-like massage oil for aches and bruises. But be wary of sun exposure when using this plant, internally or externally!



PSSSSST! Mothers Good Word this month in EINKANTER ("AYN kant er"), it means a stone with a single windblown sharp edge. If you need a semi-public password with a 1 month expiration, please use Mothers Good Word.

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